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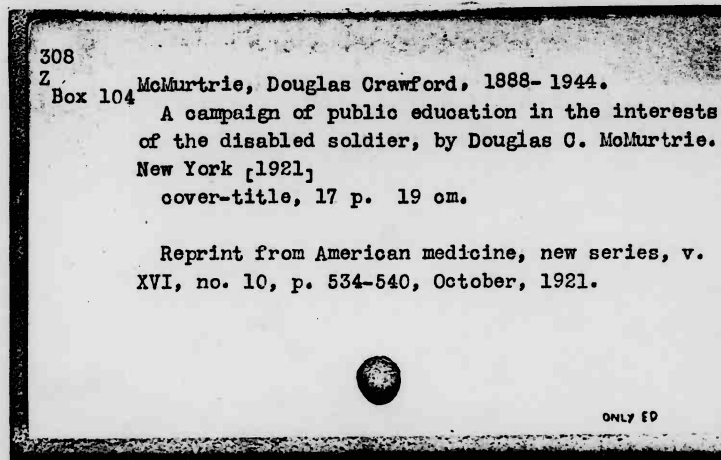
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A CAMPAIGN OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE INTERESTS OF THE DISABLED SOLDIER

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BY
DOUGLAS C. McMURTRIE,
New York City



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A CAMPAIGN OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE INTERESTS OF THE DISABLED SOLDIER.

BY

DOUGLAS C. McMURTRIE,

New York City.

Secretary, Institute for Crippled and Disabled Men; President, Federation of Associations for Cripples; Editor, *American Journal of Care for Cripples*.

One of the chief obstacles to the complete success of European provision for the re-education of war cripples has been the lack of intelligent interest in the work on the part of the public. The importance of a thoro campaign of publicity in connection with a system of re-education has not been realized fully by any of our Allies, and as a result, many a disabled soldier has neglected to take advantage of the opportunities offered him to learn a new trade and thus increase his chances for a good future.

The fault does not lie with the public; there is always ready sympathy for the cripple and a willingness on the part of the public to help him. But that "help" is more often a hindrance, simply because the public does not understand the benefits of re-education, nor does it take readily to innovation. Witness the dropping of a coin

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into the one-legged beggar's cup on the highway; behold the "patriotic" citizen offering the cripple soldier a drink; or the kind society lady taking the hero out of the hospital to attend a "tea" in his honor. All well-intentioned actions, but not one that offers constructive assistance to the man who is on the threshold of a second battle with life.

There is only one way to "educate the public"—by having one's own object clearly in mind and then, by repeated and energetic efforts, to place it before the people graphically and forcefully.

The first campaign of public education in the interests of the disabled American soldier was launched by an unofficial agency, the Red Cross Institute for Crippled and Disabled Men, one year before Congress passed a law delegating to a government department the responsibility of re-educating American war cripples. Active in this movement were men and women who had made a careful study of the problem of the cripple long before America entered the war, and who were equipped to strike out boldly when the right time came. These leaders in the field saw the futility of waiting until the first casualty lists were posted or until the disabled men were returned to our shores, and as early as May,

1917, began to advocate "A Square Deal for the Crippled Soldier." A pamphlet bearing this title was widely distributed by public utility corporations, department stores, etc., and over a million persons were reached directly with the message that, briefly stated, was "Give the crippled soldier a chance—not charity."

There followed quickly in the wake of this circular a second folder entitled, "Your Duty to the War Cripple," of which six millions were distributed. These folders were reprinted by the press, used in the form of advertisements, and received editorial comment. They marked the first milestone of the journey, the first message to the people of the United States that a cripple was not to be regarded as an object of charity or as a hopeless dependent upon the community.

Simultaneously, there appeared a pamphlet entitled, "Reconstructing the Crippled Soldier," which gave the philosophy of the subject, the result of European experience, and the technic required to return effectively a disabled man to civil life. This booklet, with illustrations of war cripples at work in the European schools, created wide public interest. There was issued also an article, "The Duty of the Employer in the Reconstruction of the Crippled Soldier"

by the present writer, which was sent to all the chambers of commerce of the United States, the prominent individuals and to the leading trade journals of the country, with requests that they publish it. The response was splendid, and several hundred journals used the article in full, some with editorial comment, and some requesting additional articles on the subject as related to their special trades. This article aroused the interest of employers who wanted to know where disabled men could be obtained to fill jobs in their factories. It was the first time in the history of the country that the cripple was regarded as a prospective workman.

From these early intensive efforts, the campaign of public education grew by leaps and bounds. The Red Cross Institute, acting as an experiment station in the field and a clearing house for information on the cripple, established a school where cripples were trained in six trades, a library, an employment bureau, a research department, and a department of industrial surveys. It was the only special training school for cripples in the United States, and interest very naturally centered about its activities.

A series of scientific publications came into being, these treating of the work done in European countries, of the technic of

re-education and placement, and kindred subjects. These publications were similar to articles published in a magazine issued prior to the war, entitled the *American Journal of Care for Cripples*.

Very early in the campaign, as special news service for the daily press was inaugurated, and informative articles, not publicity stories, were submitted for publication. It was found that America was interested in what was being done in reconstruction abroad, for she, too, has had to face similar problems. The first story told of the reconstruction of disabled peasants in Italy; the second described the efforts of the Belgians in restoring their expatriated soldiers to self-support; the third article recounted the work of the re-educational school at Düsseldorf, Germany, while a fourth described the pioneer efforts of France in providing facilities for the reconstruction of her crippled *poilus*.

A related activity in public education has consisted in writing "letters to the editor," purposed for publication in the daily press thruout the country. These letters aim to stimulate people to think about the subject of rehabilitation and to adopt a constructive attitude toward the returned disabled soldier.

To meet the heavy demand made upon it

for articles, the department of public education sought the cooperation of a number of prominent writers, who were found most willing to volunteer their services. Several "writers' meetings" to discuss the scope of the cripple problem have been productive of excellent results.

For magazines, trade journals, and other periodicals that print illustrated articles, photographs were supplied showing disabled men at work in a variety of occupations in Canada, France, England, Italy, Germany, India, and the United States.

An effective agent in the publicity campaign is the spoken word. To carry a direct appeal to the people, a public speaking service was instituted. Officers of the Institute have accepted engagements nationally, to speak before conventions, associations, chambers of commerce, etc., on various phases of the subject. Local speaking engagements, before Red Cross Chapters, meetings of school teachers and so forth, are being filled continually by members of the Institute staff. These talks are almost always illustrated by slides and motion picture films, which have been found most effective and convincing proofs that the disabled man can overcome his physical disabilities if he is given the chance, and can take his place in the industrial and social

world on an equal footing with the able-bodied workman.

Another valuable method of bringing the message home to the people is the "traveling exhibit," which consists of large posters on which are printed enlarged photographs of cripples at work and suitable captions. These "exhibits" consist of a set of 18 panels, and are readily rolled up and posted in a mailing tube. They are effective for important conferences and conventions.

There were also issued posters bearing the title, "Facts of Interest to the Disabled Soldier and Sailor," which told very briefly the provisions that the government agencies had made for taking care of the disabled man from the time he entered the hospital to the time that he was placed in profitable employment. The poster contained a complete statement of the advantages that were open to every disabled soldier. Copies of this poster were sent to the leading libraries in the United States with the request that they post them on their bulletin boards, and that they ask local newspapers to give publicity to the material. Ready support was received from the libraries and also from the newspapers in this phase of the campaign of public education.

To bring home the message of the disabled soldier to the millions of foreign-

born people resident in America, an effort was made to interest the foreign language newspapers thruout the country, with requests for publication of booklets printed in their own language and entitled, "Making Disabled Men into Skilled and Able Workmen." The response from the foreign language press has been most gratifying. To date, articles have been published in the French, German, Italian, Spanish, Yiddish, Hungarian, Danish, Norwegian, Greek and Polish newspapers.

Later on, the Institute was successful in interesting news and photographic syndicates in using material of national consequence. Thus, hundreds of newspapers thruout the country were supplied with stories or photographs.

Another publication that stimulated considerable interest in the disabled man, among the general reading public, was *Carry On*, edited by the Office of the Surgeon-General of the U. S. Army, and published by the American Red Cross. Prominent men and women were invited to contribute to its columns, while leading poster artists and cartoonists brightened its pages with original appropriate illustrations. Glancing rapidly over the table of contents of the early issues of *Carry On*, one encounters the names of Woodrow Wilson,

Theodore Roosevelt, and Charles M. Schwab.

A comprehensive campaign of public education was later launched by the Federal Board of Vocational Education, the government department charged by law with the responsibility of restoring disabled soldiers to self-support. The official organ of this agency is the *Vocational Summary*, a monthly journal that gives an account of its activities. The Board conducts a department of news service and issues "rehabilitation leaflets," "opportunity monographs" to the men on board ship and in the hospitals. These are popular in character, of course, and some of them bear the titles, "Hey there, Buddy," "What can you do for the Disabled Soldier and Sailor?" "Overseas and back to Civil Life," "To the Sweethearts, Sisters, Wives and Mothers of Discharged Soldiers and Sailors," "President Wilson's Message on Healing the Hurts of our Wounded," "To the Disabled Officer," "What the Employers of America can do for the Disabled Soldiers and Sailors," "To the Household of the Disabled Soldier and Sailor," "To the Disabled Soldier and Sailor in the Hospital," and a number of monographs prepared by the Federal Board and issued in cooperation with the Office of the Surgeon-General, War Department,

and the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department, which tell of the opportunities for disabled soldiers in the lumber industry, electrical work, automobile mechanics, forestry, factory woodworking trades, metal trades, journalism, medicine, and other lines of endeavor.

As the result of an investigation into the activities in public education conducted by the European belligerents, it has been found that publicity has not been used to the greatest possible extent as an adjunct to their system of re-education. In Great Britain, especially, has the lack of public interest in re-education been deplored by persons engaged in the work. Only a small fraction of the men who could profit by re-training have taken advantage of the opportunity, and the reason for this is generally conceded to be the ignorance or apathy of the public. During the first two and one-half years of war, there was practically nothing done in the way of propaganda. In 1917, Major Robert Mitchell of the Ministry of Pensions issued a little booklet entitled, "To the Disabled Soldier and Sailor," containing a simple direct statement in conversational style telling of the advantage of retraining and assuring the man that his pension would not be reduced because of his increased earning

capacity after training. This booklet also contained letters written by ex-soldiers who had profited as a result of re-education. The *War Pensions Gazette* was started in May, 1917, by the Pensions Office to circulate information and to provide a medium for the exchange of ideas on aid to soldiers. It announced all official instructions issued during the month, commented on new regulations, and published short special articles relating to the field. It was addressed especially to the Local Pensions Committees and to specialists in the work.

There was started in 1917, by Lord Charnwood, a quarterly entitled, *Recalled to Life*, which was a semi-scientific magazine on rehabilitation. In 1918, the editorship of this paper was taken over by John Galsworthy and the name was changed to *Reveille*. It was judged by critics that *Recalled to Life* was neither scientific nor popular and therefore failed of its purpose. *Reveille* enlisted the cooperation of leading literary men and a single glance at its title page would be a sufficient guaranty that the material contained in the volume was worthy of attention.

A live-wire weekly which minced no words was *The Ex-Service Man*, a little paper printed by ex-service men for ex-service men. "What are you doing for us

who sacrificed limb and health for you?" was the constant refrain in its pages. This paper aimed to secure better treatment for the ex-service men, "let the chips fall where they will." Much publicity has emanated from St. Dunstan's Hostel for Blinded Soldiers, and good results have been achieved by the vigorous leadership of Sir Arthur Pearson. More recently, posters, lectures, and motion picture films have been prepared by the Ministry of Pensions. One film on re-education is said to have been exhibited to over four million people. Mr. Hodge, the former Minister of Pensions, made a lecture tour thruout the Kingdom speaking in the interest of disabled soldiers. An exhibit of appliances, tools, and photographs prepared for the Inter-allied Conference in London, May, 1918, was circulated in all the principal cities and is said to have attracted much attention.

Despite the early efforts of France to provide for her war cripples, it was found upon investigation in 1916 that only a small number of men who wanted to take retraining were actually taking it. The national office decided that additional propaganda was necessary, and accordingly it prepared a notice addressed to wounded soldiers which was sent to all departmental committees, re-education schools and to the in-

stitutions dealing with the disabled. Illustrated lectures and motion pictures have been used to some extent by the French Government, and there has been an effort made by the American Red Cross in France to awaken the returned soldier to the need of re-education. Every soldier on his discharge from the army received from the Ministry of the Interior a booklet telling him of the re-educational opportunities open to him, and urging him to take advantage of them. Included in the booklet was a list of the training schools, the trades taught, the length of apprenticeship required, and the prospective wages. Precise directions were given as to the steps a man should take to secure admission to any desired course. There was also given to soldiers on their discharge a booklet issued by the Ministry of War which contained information on their rights and privileges with regard to artificial limbs and re-education.

The Permanent Inter-Allied Conference, born of the first Inter-Allied Conference, published the *Revue Inter-Alliée pour l'Etude des Questions intéressant les Mutilés de la Guerre*. This was addressed not to the soldiers but to the educated public and was a scientific rather than a popular magazine. In addition to special arti-

cles on different phases of the rehabilitation problem, the *Revue* published an account of current measures for the disabled taken in the different countries, and reviewed books and periodicals dealing with the problem.

Another creation of the Permanent Committee was a permanent public exhibition of appliances and tools for the disabled.

The *Journal des Mutilés et Réformés et des Victimes de la Guerre*, is a weekly newspaper published by and for discharged and disabled soldiers. It has published descriptions and announcements of various schools and courses, but its main interest is in securing the rights of the *mutilés* in respect to pensions, prosthetic appliances, reserved positions and favorable treatment from the government and the public. It presents the claims of the *mutilés* in a striking and fearless fashion. Certain other newspapers, notably *La Verité* of Paris, runs a half column in the interests of the disabled soldier. This column is usually taken up with complaint about the treatment accorded.

The associations of discharged soldiers have banded together in a National Federation which is conducting a campaign for what they call their rights.

In Italy also, the need for publicity has only been partially met. The National

Federation of Committees for Assistance to Disabled Soldiers has done a great deal thru its money-raising schemes to advertise the work of the Committees. A great many post cards have been printed for sale. But the largest returns have come from the sale of boxes of matches decorated with the Italian colors. A campaign of publicity made it a public duty to buy matches in this form, and the boxes have been sold by thousands, carrying with them a widespread knowledge of the name of the Federation, if not of the work.

The real work of publicity done by the Federation is the publication of a monthly magazine, the *Bolletino della Federazione Nazionale dei Comitati di Assistenza ai Militari Ciechi, Storpi, Mutilati*. The *Bolletino* publishes special articles, reports of the local committees, and lists of positions open to cripples. It has done a great deal to inform interested persons about the work being done for disabled soldiers, but has probably made no great popular appeal.

In order to make clear to disabled soldiers what the Italian government offers them in re-education, pensions, artificial limbs, employment opportunities, and so forth, the National Board (the government body charged by law with the protection and assistance of disabled soldiers) had

published a booklet setting forth the essential facts in a clear and concise form. The booklet is illustrated with photographs showing cripples at work with the aid of artificial limbs and other appliances. It has been distributed by hundreds of thousands not only directly to disabled soldiers but to civil and military physicians, nurses, priests, teachers, and all who come in contact with the wounded.

The National Board has proposed that a short exposition of functional and vocational re-education be included in all official courses for medical students and nurses. It has also prepared moving pictures which it has shown in different cities.

Some of the local committees have undertaken publicity work. The Piedmontese Committee of Turin has issued posters urging men to attend their farm school and a booklet for cripples telling the story of re-education. (*Tre Anni Dopo*, Turin, 1916). It has also sent representatives thru the province to lecture and interest local people.

The Italian Red Cross has included in its nursing course lectures on re-education, and instructed its representatives whenever they talk with soldiers in hospitals to inform them of the possibility of re-education.

The most effective bit of propaganda among the soldier, however, is undoubtedly

the provision of the re-educational law which makes a two-weeks' stay at a school obligatory for all wounded soldiers unable to resume their former occupation.

The complete success of any big undertaking in America depends upon the hearty cooperation and support of the general public. A campaign of publicity is necessary to bring to the attention of the public any new project. This fact was realized very early by those who advocated the question of the crippled soldier, and it is small wonder that they used every means at their command to bring home their message to every person concerned.

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